

**FY14 Q3 Report: April - June 2014**



Day of the African Child March in Bangassou (Photo taken by Olga, Mercy Corps)

Submitted: July 28, 2014

**The Southeast Economic Recovery and Protection Project (SERAP)**

Funded by USAID / Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)

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## 1. Executive Summary

The Southeast Economic Recovery and Protection Project (SERAP) began in June 2013 to respond to the mounting protection and relief needs of conflict-affected communities in Southeastern Central African Republic (CAR). The goal of the program is to increase food security, enhance community resilience and strengthen the protective environment via community-based mechanisms for children, women and men affected by conflict in the Mbomou prefecture, including survivors, escapees, and host communities.

During the reporting period, the project achieved the following:

- In Rafai, 95 Protection Committee members participated in training sessions on child rights and the practical implementation of community awareness-raising of protection issues.
- 21 community counselors were trained on listening and mediation skills in Bangassou
- Mercy Corps distributed 2,940 agricultural tools to 420 households displaced due to LRA violence.
- Twice weekly play therapy groups/clubs continued throughout Bangassou and Rafai, with a total of 36 groups with 30 children per group.
- Beneficiaries in Rafai and Bangassou celebrated the Day of the African Child by participating in educational games and football matches organized by Mercy Corps.
- Thirty-six play therapy groups started implementing their micro-projects with support from coaches and the wider community.
- The two Listening Centers responded to 154 cases, 27 of which were children.

## 2. Program Overview

SERAP was designed to respond to the mounting protection and relief needs of conflict-affected communities in southeastern CAR. Mbomou Prefecture has been particularly affected, following the repeated civil conflict and attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that have persisted in 2012 as well as new conflict caused by the Séléka rebel coalition. Mercy Corps has built upon the foundation of past successful protection programs in Rafai, Bangassou and surrounding areas, providing much-needed assistance in the areas of psychosocial support, GBV prevention and response, health, and economic support to internally displaced persons (IDPs). This program enables Mercy Corps to provide urgently needed support to LRA conflict-affected survivors through interventions in child protection, agriculture, food security, and socio-economic support, as well as humanitarian coordination and information management. It also enables Mercy Corps to continue to build the capacity of local organizations to respond to protection needs.

Expected Results:

- 33,381 vulnerable people, including 3,000 IDPs in LRA-affected communities will continue to have access to protection services, including prevention and response to GBV;
- 3,500 vulnerable people, including 2,000 IDPs in LRA-affected communities will have restored assets in order to promote livelihoods and economic recovery;
- 2,000 vulnerable people, including 1,250 IDPs in LRA-affected communities will have improved agriculture livelihoods and income generation opportunities;
- Surveillance information will be collected to provide timely and rigorous early warning and vulnerability information on emerging and evolving crises situations for 93,457 people living in the Mbomou prefecture, including 10,000 IDPs.

### **3. Security**

The security situation in Mbomou prefecture continues to remain more stable than in other parts of the country. There is a MISCA (International Support Mission to the Central African Republic) presence in both Bangassou and Rafai, and neither town has a Séléka or Anti-Balaka presence. Nevertheless, Séléka forces have attempted to enter Bangassou twice over the course of the last reporting period. Even though MISCA was able to successfully turn Séléka away more than 30 km outside of town, the threat of another violent Séléka takeover, under the auspices of protecting the Muslim population, continues to threaten the local population. The conflict in the rest of the country continues to affect tensions in Bangassou and Rafai. There have been a couple of minor incidents between members of the Muslim and Christian populations, which remind us that even with the relative calm, the underlying tension remains high.

The Séléka rebels still patrol roads between Bangassou and Bambari. This, along with the onset of the rainy season and the destruction to the roads during this season, is limiting travel and hindering the delivery of supplies to the region. This is having a significant impact on market availability in the Southeast. The security situation in Bangui still remains tense and uncertain which has also had an impact on flight schedules to the southeast, restricting Mercy Corps ability to move staff and resources into the field. This has caused delays to our programs, especially in Rafai.

## 4. Performance Summary

### Award-level Beneficiaries

Cumulative Period Targeted		Reporting Period Reached		Cumulative Period Reached	
Total	IDP	Total	IDP	Total	IDP
93,457	10,000	20,983	1,467	85,850	8,937

### Progress to Date

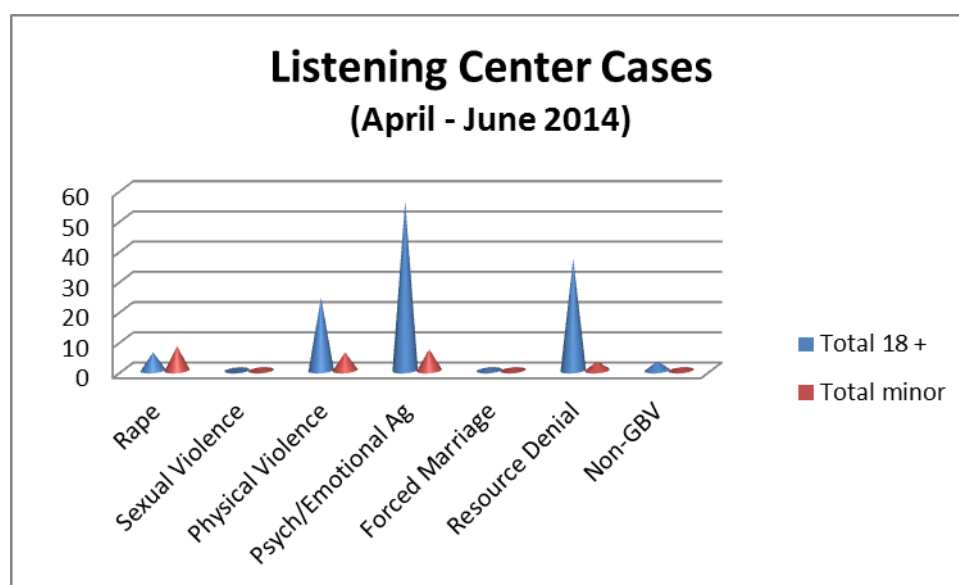
SECTOR #1 PROTECTION	Objective: LRA-affected populations have continued access to protection services				
Geographic Area (s)	Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR, with particular focus in the towns of Rafai, Agoumar, Selim, Dembia, Geurekindo and surrounding villages				
Beneficiaries Targeted	Total: 15,000		IDP: 3,000		
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)	Total: 20,983		IDP: 1,467		
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)	Total: 64,975		IDP: 4,253		
Subsector: Child Protection					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of people trained in child protection, disaggregated by sex	Male	Yes	5,662	3,287	15,816
	Female	Yes	8,493	3,278	16,736
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Percentage of targeted children reporting an improvement in their sense of safety and well-being at program close, disaggregated by sex.	Boys	Yes	75%	0*	NA*
	Girls	Yes	75%	0*	NA*
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Subsector: Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of individuals benefitting from GBV services, by sex	Male	Yes	3,500	6,169	18,949
	Female	Yes	3,500	8,249	24,790
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Number of people trained in GBV prevention or response, by sex	Male	Yes	20	0	107
	Female	Yes	15	0	36
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Subsector: Psychosocial Support Services					

INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Reached
Number of people trained in psychosocial support services, by sex	Male	Yes	0	0	0
	Female	Yes	21	0	40
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA

**\*This indicator will be measured at the close of the program**

### Gender Based Violence Prevention and Response

The listening centers in Rafai and Bangassou received 154 cases during this reporting period. Cases were given psychosocial support and medical referrals as needed. In this reporting period, the following types of GBV were received:



Community counselors and protection committees continued to educate the public on the realities and consequences of gender based violence, child protection, human rights, the dangers of HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, gender equity, the role of the listening center and its referral system.

Mercy Corps held coordination meetings each month with community counselors, protection committees and play therapy coaches. The purpose of these meetings is to better coordinate activities within the community, seek feedback about protection issues in the community and to trouble shoot any issues encountered in the field. Through these coordination meetings Mercy Corps is able to better plan activities that meet the needs of the communities. As a result of feedback received from community counselors this period listening center staff encouraged community counselors to provide more education on the referral system and the role of the Listening Center in the community. Community counselors discovered that many community members have been under the impression that the Listening Center services are for women only; therefore staff believe that sensitizations on the role the Listening Center plays for all survivors of violence and conflict has led to some men feeling more comfortable seeking psychosocial care for trauma. Given this view, Mercy Corps will communicate the purpose of the center and the services it offers to the community ensuring that messages are gender inclusive.



Community Counselor Sensitization Impact April - June 2014				
Women	Men	Girls	Boys	Total
5,141	3,940	3,108	2,229	<b>14,418</b>

### Child Protection

Mercy Corps celebrated the Day of the African Child on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June by organizing several activities with play therapy participants. In Rafai, a football tournament was organized with matches taking place the week leading up to the Day itself when two final matches were played with the two finalist girls and boys teams. Their winning team received prizes including candy, school books, pens and soaps. The Day started with a lesson for 100 students (33 girls and 67 boys) on the meaning of the Day of the African Child and what it means to have the right of participation which covered topics such as the importance of civic engagement and obtaining a birth certificate. This lesson included a question and answer game, also with prizes for winners. In Bangassou the Day was celebrated with a march through town of over 150 play therapy participants, coaches and community leaders. As well as celebrating the day, the march also aimed to make children's rights more visible. After which, the children participated in a question and answer game related to the meaning of the Day of the African Child and child protection.

During this reporting period Mercy Corps held trainings for the 95 Protection Committee members of Rafai and surrounding areas (Madabazouma, Selim, Kpiemou, Guerekindo and Dembia). The 95 participants were split between two training sessions which covered topics related to child protection, child rights the practical application of community sensitizations, reporting on committee activities and the execution of play therapy micro-project with the play therapy coaches. A similar training has been scheduled for protection committee members in Bangassou for July.

A three-day training was held in Bangassou for the 21 community counselors with the aim of improving their listening and mediation skills. The training provided community counselors with the necessary skills to perform effective mediation in the field for cases of psychological violence and resource denial, especially in areas that are far from the listening center or where survivors are unable to leave home. The training covered GBV protocols under national and international law, the referral pathway, guiding principles of GBV services (confidentiality, non-discrimination etc.), the causes and contributing factors of GBV, mediation and negotiation skills and how to explain legal procedures to survivors. Mediation will only be implemented for more superficial conflicts that do not threaten the security, health or dignity of survivors, for these cases the community counselors will refer survivors directly to the listening centers for more intensive and professional support. The community counselors will begin implementing mediation with survivors from the next quarter and will receive further training to reinforce the support they provide. Survivors of physical and sexual violence are always encouraged to go to the listening center in order to receive professional care and referral to a medical service.



Play Therapy  
group members  
on a football  
field in  
Bangassou

Play therapy groups continue to meet twice weekly to play volleyball or soccer and to learn more about peace building and conflict mitigation among peers. There are 36 play therapy groups with 30 children in each group. All of the play therapy groups submitted their ideas and budgets for proposed micro-projects. These projects include: football and handball fields, volleyball and basketball courts, book and video libraries, and two latrine/water point rehabilitations at the groups' schools. Due to the tenuous security situation, Mercy Corps has experienced several delays in delivery of materials from Bangui for these activities, but the last materials are expected to arrive in Bangassou and Rafai at the end of June. In the meantime, Mercy Corps was able to move forward with some activities.

In May, Mbomou prefecture surveyors surveyed and measured out the field areas for the sports field micro-projects. They then provided reports to Mercy Corps on the dimensions and locations of the fields. For the sports fields, Mercy Corps supplied play therapy coaches with clean up kits, which consisted of a tape measure, rakes and shovels. With these kits, the coaches worked with community volunteers, parents and play therapy group participants to clear away grass, rocks, garbage, etc. on the fields ready to create football fields, volleyball and basketball courts as planned by the play therapy participant members. With the help of members of the community, parents and coaches, play therapy group members cleared away areas for football fields, volleyball and basketball courts. The wider communities are invested in continuing to help the children finish their micro-projects, which will be completed during the next reporting period.

<b>SECTOR #2</b> <b>Economic Recovery and Market Systems</b>	<i>Objective:</i> Livelihood assets of LRA-affected IDP and host households are restored in order to meet household needs	
Geographic Area (s)	Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR, with particular focus in Bangassou town	
Beneficiaries Targeted	Total: 3,500	IDP: 2,000

Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)	Total: 0			IDP: 0	
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)	Total: 3,520			IDP: 2,112	
Subsector: Livelihoods Restoration					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Period Reached
Number of people assisted through livelihood restoration activities, by sex	Male	Yes	1,470	0	1,489
	Female	Yes	2,030	0	2,505
	Other	NA	NA	NA	NA
Percent of beneficiaries reporting their livelihoods restored within three to six months after receiving support	N/A	Yes	75%	NA	75%
Total USD amount channeled into the program area through livelihoods restoration activities	N/A	Yes	\$19.6 /beneficiary (\$68,600 total)	0	\$19.6 /beneficiary (\$68,600 total)
Subsector: Microfinance					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Period Reached
Number of people, by sex, or MSEs newly receiving financial services or continuing to receive financial services due to USAID/OFDA support	Male	Yes	189	0	189
	Female	Yes	261	0	261
	Other	NA	NA	NA	NA
Percentage of financial service accounts/groups supported by USAID/OFDA that are functioning properly	N/A	Yes	75% of groups	0	0
Total USD amount channeled into the program area through sub-sector activities	N/A	Yes	\$2,160	0	0

### Resilience groups progress:

Following the Resilience Group's Income Generating Activities (IGA) training, young people's vocational trainings and the cash grants received for inputs to set up income generating activities, beneficiaries have been progressing with these activities independently during this reporting period. The program team will monitor these livelihood activities in August to gauge their impact on income generation and gain beneficiary feedback. August is the most appropriate time to monitor progress, as at least six months is required to determine the impact of IGAs, especially as the conflict environment has slowed down economic development and markets remain extremely restricted. In spite of these challenges, with Mercy Corps' support, program beneficiaries have begun implementing their IGAs such as trading meat products, selling smoked fish, producing and selling items including clothes, bricks and furniture and service provision such as mechanics. The full details of these activities, including success stories, will be reported in the next report.



Resilience Groups completed their Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) VSLA training in January and February, but unfortunately, the VSLA activities were not able to be set up in time for the groups to complete the 9-month saving and loan cycle. Mercy Corps experienced delays in programming in both Bangassou and Rafai due to the conflict's impact on local and national markets, as well as its effects on transportation of both people and cargo. Mercy Corps plans to begin the VSLA activities during the next phase of the project.

<b>SECTOR #3</b> <b>Agriculture and Food Security</b>		<i>Objective:</i> Agricultural livelihoods and income generation opportunities are strengthened for LRA-affected IDP and host households			
Geographic Area (s)	Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR, with particular focus in Bangassou town				
Beneficiaries Targeted	Total: 2,000	IDP: 1,250			
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)	Total: 0	IDP: 0			
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)	Total: 2,000	IDP: 2,000			
Subsector: Improving Agricultural Production/Food Security					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Period Reached
Number of people benefiting from seed systems/agricultural input activities, by sex.	Male	Yes	1,160	0	1,160
	Female	Yes	840	0	840
	Other	Yes	NA	NA	NA
Projected increase in the number of months of food self-sufficiency due to seed system activities/ agricultural input for beneficiary households.	N/A	Yes	2 months	To be measured at the end of the project	0

### Agricultural Tool Kits:

Activities under Sector 3 were completed during this reporting period. The final major activity was a distribution of agricultural tools to the 417 households displaced by the LRA from Rafai and Nzacko, currently living in Bangassou who have participated in agricultural training through the program. With the help of the Bangassou Displaced Persons committee, a partner of the local Central African Red Cross, Mercy Corps organized a kit distribution at Mercy Corps' base in Bangassou. Using beneficiary lists selected with the support of the Bangassou Displaced Persons committee, 2940 tools in total were distributed. Each of the 420 kits contained a watering can (420), two shovels (840), a hoe (420), two rakes (840) and an axe (420). The kits were given to the heads of households which included 137 men and 280 women, the three remaining kits were for families who were unable to attend the distribution, and this will be held and distributed to the families within the next reporting period.

After the distribution, Mercy Corps staff monitored activities of the different farmer groups on the parcels of land they were given by the town council of Bangassou as a result of negotiation and coordination through the program. The groups have cultivated and planted the land which was distributed equally amongst the 420 IDP farmers. Unfortunately most crops won't be harvested until after the end of the current program yet progress will be reported for some of the crops with shorter harvest times in the next report.



IDP famers receive agricultural tools in Bangassou (Photo taken by Olga, Mercy Corps)

<b>SECTOR #4</b> <b>Humanitarian Coordination and Information Management</b>		<i>Objective:</i> Monthly surveillance data is collected to contribute to the national Early Warning System			
Geographic Area (s)		Mbomou Prefecture in Southeastern CAR			
Beneficiaries Targeted		Total: 93,457		IDP: 10,000	
Beneficiaries Reached (Reporting Period)		Total: 0		IDP: 0 <sup>1</sup>	
Beneficiaries Reached (Cumulative)		Total: <b>2000</b>		IDP: <b>2000</b>	
Subsector: Information Management					
INDICATORS	Disaggregated	Applicable	Cumulative Value Targeted	Reporting Period Reached	Cumulative Period Reached
Number and percentage of humanitarian organizations utilizing information management services	N/A	Yes	24	8	8 (33%)
Number and percentage of humanitarian organizations directly contributing to information products	N/A	Yes	25	1	9 (36%)
Number of products made available by information management services that are accessed by clients	N/A	Yes	12	1	6 (50%)

The program team submitted the bi-weekly collected data collected in Rafai and Bangassou markets via online based database (ODK) to Action Against Hunger (AAH). However the monthly surveillance bulletin was not produced because some partners were not able to

<sup>1</sup> The beneficiaries of this sector should be all beneficiaries of the other sectors of the project, as they all benefit from the Early Warning System that is put in place by our partners. Unfortunately, with no bulletin having been provided for our region, we don't know the impact it has had over the period.

collect and submit for reasons that are beyond our control. The only one produced bulletin covered only the markets of Bangui. However, humanitarian information is regularly shared with direct and indirect project's beneficiaries in the operational areas.

## **5. Monitoring & Evaluation**

Program staff members continue to use the GBVIMS to collect data on gender based violence cases seen in the listening center. After the farming tool distribution Mercy Corps staff monitored activities in the field with the farming groups, providing technical guidance on field cultivation. In June, Mercy Corps staff, along with help from community leaders, conducted focus groups, and questionnaires, with program participant under the protection sector for the final program evaluation. All data and information has now been collected for the final program evaluation under the protection sector and the data for the other sectors will be gathered in August. The results will be presented in the final report.

## **6. Coordination**

Mercy Corps participates in regular coordination meetings in Bangassou with all the other partners in the area, including Save the Children, Acted, MSF and Coheb, in order to coordinate information and activities and share important security related information. In addition, Mercy Corps is a member of the South-East coordination mechanism led by OCHA held in Bangui to coordinate among all actors in the Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou regions. Finally, Mercy Corps shares key information on the program activities and security in the South East at Protection Cluster meetings, GBV and Child Protection sub-cluster meetings and Food security Meetings held on a bi-monthly basis in Bangui.

## **7. Conclusion and Upcoming Activities**

During this reporting period the food security program was concluded and many of the final protection trainings were held with protection committees, community counselors and play therapy coaches. In the next reporting period Mercy Corps will continue to provide psychosocial support to survivors through the listening centers and will finish the micro-projects with the Play Therapy groups.

The next quarter will be focused on the following activities:

1. The continuation of play therapy activities in Bangassou, Rafai and surrounding areas
2. Continuation of the Listening Center's activities and providing psychosocial support of LRA and GBV affected survivors
3. Early Warning Surveillance System activities
4. Conclusion of Play therapy club micro-projects